Vol. VI. Numb. 98

# THE OBSERVATOR.

*On the Addreſs of the Commons to her Majeſty, about our having but* 8660 *Men, beſides commiſſion'd and non-commiſſion'd Officers in* Spain *and* Portugal, *inſtead of* 29395 *provided for by Parliament, for that Service in* 1707. *On the Abuſes complain'd of in the Revenue of Exciſe. The State of the Fleet fit to be enquir'd into. On the Bill to prevent Bribery and Corruption in electing Members of Parliament.*

From **Wednesday**, February 4. to **Saturday**, February 7. 1708.

*Obſ.* WHat News from the Parliament, *Roger*? *Country-m.* Great and good News, Maſter, which I am ſure will pleaſe you, and all true *Britains.*

*Obſ.* Out with it, *Roger*; for in ſuch Caſes I can't bear with Suſpence and Delay.

*Country-m.* God bleſs them, Maſter; I hope you will allow me Time to ſay my Prayers for them, and join your *Amen.*

*Obſ.* Yes, yes, *Roger*, I will give an hundred Amens to all Prayers, that God may bleſs the Queen and Parliament. But I want your News.

*Country-m.* I'll eaſe your Longing, Maſter, Madam *Neceſſity* has call'd to them, to enquire into the Management of the War, and they have found, "That of the 29395 *Engliſh* Forces, pro-"vided by Parliament for the Service of *Spain* and "*Portugal* in 1707, there was but 8660 Men, be-"ſides commiſſion'd and non-commiſſion'd Offi-"cers and Servants in *Spain* and *Portugal*, at the "Time of the Battel of *Almanza*: And they have "agreed, that the whole Houſe ſhall preſent an Ad-"dreſs to her Majeſty, that ſhe will be graciouſly "pleas'd to order an Account to be laid before "them, how it came to paſs, that there were no "more *Engliſh* Forces in *Spain* and *Portugal*, at that "Time; and alſo, that her Majeſty will be pleas'd "to uſe her utmoſt Endeavours, that the War in "*Spain* may be vigorouſly and effectually proſecuted.

*Obſ.* I'll not only join with thee and all honeſt *Britains* in praying for them, *Roger*, but likewiſe in giving Praiſe to God, that we have ſuch a Parliament, who act the Part of loyal Subjects, and true Patriots. 'Tis they alone, who, under God, are able effectually to enquire into, and puniſh the great Abuſes put upon her Majeſty, and the Nation; of which, this ſeems to be a crying one. Bleſs me, *Roger*, there's a Deficiency indeed! 20735 Men, or thereabouts, wanting out of 29395 that the Nation has paid for! What's become of all our Money appropriated for that Uſe, *Roger*, can'ſt tell me that?

*Country-m.* Not I, Maſter, but I'll ſpeak to my Repreſentatives to enquire; and I will likewiſe put 'em in Mind to ask, who are our Ambaſſadors in *Spain* and *Portugal*, and elſewhere, and whether they acquainted her Majeſty with that, and other Defects in the Management of the War? I will alſo talk to them, to enquire into our Recruits, and to haſten them; and to ſee whether any Officers cheat the Queen and the Nation by Vacancies? For by theſe Methods, Maſter, ſuch of them as are ill Men, may very well exceed our greateſt Quality in their Plate, and Way of living, and game at the Rate of 500 *l.* an Hour; while I, and others of my honeſt Neighbours, who pay Money to carry on the War, muſt be content with Wooden Diſhes, and Earthen Platters, and glad if we have any Meat to eat out of them.

*Obſ.* Thou ſay'ſt very well, *Roger*: Pray when thy Hand is in, put them alſo in Mind to enquire into the Abuſes upon her Majeſty, and the Nation, by Frauds in the Cuſtoms, Exciſe, and other Branches of the Revenue. Were it in my Power to prevent it, *Roger*, no Body ſhould cheat the Queen clandeſtinely, bring Cargoes of Wine to the Beer-Cellar, under the Notion of Baggage, or bring over many 10000 *l.* Worth of *French* Silks, on Pretence of honouring her Majeſty, by appearing ſuperfine on her Birth-day, while, at the ſame Time, they cheat her of her Cuſtoms, and our Merchants of their Trade.

*Country-m.* I will put my Repreſentatives in Mind of thoſe Things, Maſter; for it grieves me to the Heart, that ſo good and ſo gracious a Queen, ſhould be cheated by thoſe, who have their Bread from her; and now that you talk of the Exciſe, I'll put my Parliament-men in Mind of a Book publiſh'd laſt Year, with a Preface to the Houſe of Commons, entitl'd, *An impartial Account of ſome late Tranſactions in the Office of Exciſe, with an Hiſtorical Collection of Matters of Fact*, wherein the Authors, who, I ſuppoſe, may be a Legion of Brewers and Diſtillers, make grievous Complaints of the Hardſhips they lie under, "By having Money extorted from them, "contrary to the true Intent and Deſign of the "Laws of Exciſe; and adviſe thoſe concern'd, to "look back to the *Spencers* and *Gaveſtones* of old, "who abus'd the Law, and the Favour of their "Prince, in illegal Extortions, Briberies, and Cor-"ruptions, and fell a Sacrifice to the Nation's Juſtice.

*Obſ.* You will do very well, *Roger*, to lay thoſe Things before your Repreſentatives; for it's very hard, when Trade is ſo low, and our Taxes neceſſarily ſo heavy, by Reaſon of a long and expenſive War, that trading Subjects, of any Sort, ſhould have Reaſon to complain of Oppreſſion by the Nation's Servants in the Way of their Buſineſs. Princes are neither Omnipreſent nor Omniſcient, and therefore it's the Happineſs of our Conſtitution, that we have a Parliament, compos'd of Members, ſent up from all Parts of the Kingdom, who have their Eyes every where throughout the whole, and are the Nation's grand Inqueſt to find out, and redreſs Grievances.

*Country-m.* God bleſs and direct them in all their Enquiries, Maſter; I hope, in a few Days, to bring you an Account of the Succeſs of their Enquiries into that great Deficiency of our Army in *Spain* and *Portugal*.

*Obſ.* I hope ſo too, *Roger*; for had that Number of Troops been made good, and under the Conduct of a General of ſuch Conduct, Courage, and Stratagem, as the Earl of *Peterborough* appears to be, by his Campaign of *Valencia*; in all Probability, there had been no Need now of an Addreſs from the Commons, *That the War in* Spain *may be vigorouſly and effectually proſecuted*; ſince, humanly ſpeaking, the War had been at an End ere this Time, or at leaſt we ſhould not have had that melancholy Proſpect of Affairs on that Side, as we have at preſent. God alone knows, *Roger*, what Blood and Treaſure that might have ſav'd to us, and to the whole Confederacy; and what it may coſt us, before we recover thoſe Advantages, that we ſo unhappily loſt in *Spain*.

*Country-m.* That's a Subject which makes my Heart ake every Time I think on't, Maſter; certainly, our Generals

Generals in those Parts, could not be so far wanting in Intelligence, as not to know what Forces our Parliament had provided for them; nor could they be so negligent of their Muster-Rolls, as not to know how far their Men came short of the appointed Number; and if they knew both, 'tis strange they should not have acquainted the Government with it. This looks as if there had been some wretched Neglect in the Case. But however those Things are, to me it seems plain, her Majesty, and the Nation has been impos'd upon in this Matter, one Way or other; for we find, when the Parliament met, her Majesty, in her most gracious Speech, express'd the utmost Zeal for carrying on the War there with Vigour; as, that without which, neither we, nor our Allies could be safe; and both Houses readily agreed with her Majesty in this Matter, as may be seen by their Addresses. But no Body could think, that when the Parliament had appointed 29395 Men, 8660 were sufficient to carry on the War with Vigour. This would have been a meer Mockery. I doubt not, Master, our Parliament will take Care to have their Resolves put in Execution, better than those of the *German* Dyet; and that our Allies shall not have the same Cause to upbraid us, as they do the Empire, for coming so far short in the Number of their Army. It can't be said, our Parliament has been defective in raising Money; they grant Millions of Pounds sterling with more Readiness, than the Dyet of the Empire grants Thousands of Rix-dollars. Nor have we heard of such Complaints from any of our Generals, but the Earl of *Peterborough*, as the Elector of *Hannover* is forc'd to make to the Dyet, for Want of Money, Men, and all other Necessaries to carry on the War: Therefore 'tis our Concern, Master, since we are not backward in paying the Money demanded, to make a through Enquiry into the Causes of our Army's falling so much short in their Number: And I hope, Master, the State of our Fleet will also be narrowly inspected into; you and I, and every Body, pay for maintaining so many Ships of War, Officers, and Seamen; we allow for Wear and Tear, and every Thing else; yet, notwithstanding all this, we are insulted in our own Harbours, bully'd out of the Dominion of our own Seas, and our Merchants are ruin'd by frequent Captures; and yet we are told by mercenary Babblers, of an acknowledg'd Superiority at Sea.

*Obs.* Well, *Roger*, we are now to hope for better Things, since our Parliament have taken the Matter into Consideration. Let Under-spur-leathers talk what they please of the executive Power, our Representatives are impower'd by the Constitution to take Care, that the Nation don't suffer by Male-Administration. *Edward* the III. one of our greatest and most victorious Princes, tho' he had an Army flush'd with Conquest, by which, had he been an ill Man, he might have pretended to give Law, instead of receiving it, submitted both himself and his Army to the Direction of the Parliament, in his War against *France*; and he publickly own'd to the World, as appears by his History, that he held it unreasonable to enter upon the managing of an offensive foreign War, without the Concurrence of his People. Our Parliaments understood their Power better in that Reign, than to leave all to the Arbitriment of his Ministers, Cabinets, and Privy Councils; and that wise Prince, was fully convinc'd of the Truth of that Sentence, pronounc'd by the wisest of Kings, *That in the Multitude of Counsellors, there is Safety*; and that none were so fit to give Council about managing the War, as those whose Purses must bear the Charge of it. And it's our great Happiness now, that her Majesty, in Imitation of her wisest Predecessors, is willing, in every Thing to concur with her Parliament, which gives us a fair Prospect of having all publick Grievances and Abuses effectually redress'd.

*Country-m.* I have more good News to tell you from the Parliament, Master; our noble Patriots, the Commons, are upon a Bill, *for the better preventing Bribery and Corruption, and other undue Practices in electing Members to serve in Parliament.*

*Obs.* That shews them to be noble Patriots indeed, *Roger*; and we have Reason to bless God, that notwithstanding all the Methods which have been us'd to debauch the Genius of the Nation, and to pack and bribe Parliaments in late Reigns, there's so much of the Wisdom and Bravery of our Ancestors left among us. Our gallant Predecessors found, by woful Experience, in the Reign of *Henry* the IV. that a King, *who has Soldiers scatter'd over the Kingdom, might easily sway the County-Courts, and make Parliaments for their own Purpose*; therefore, knowing, that an Error in Elections, is like one in the first Concoction, which spoils the whole Nutriment, they made excellent Laws for regulating Elections, in the Reigns of *Henry* the IV. V. and VI. and particularly in 23 *Hen.* 6. Cap. 15. *That no Person must serve for any City or Burrough, nor give Vote in electing such as shall serve for that Town, unless they be both free, and Resiants within that City or Burrough*; and to prevent those Confusions and Parties, which Elections were then subject to, they did before, in the 8th of that Reign, make a Law restraining the Elections of Knights of Shires, *to such as could make it appear, upon Oath, that they had* 40 *Shillings yearly in free Lands, or Tenements in the County*: For until then, any *English*-man had a Right to elect, or be elected, in what part of the World soever he resided. But since our Parliament is now upon that Subject, we have all the Reason of the World to hope, that they will provide against all such Abuses, as Men have hitherto made use of, to elude former good Laws to regulate Elections; and to their Judgment we must submit it, whether they think fit to introduce the Practice of Ballotting at Elections, which is practis'd in other wise Governments, to prevent the Electors being overaw'd, to vote contrary to their own Minds, by such of the Candidates as may be capable to do them an Injury in their Business, or other ways, if they deny them their Vote; and in such Cases make it penal, for any Man to ask of the Electors, for whom they design to vote, or have voted.

*Country-m.* What Methods did our Ancestors take, Master, to prevent the Influence of Courts upon Elections?

*Obs.* They were so careful, *Roger*, to prevent the Legislature and executive Powers coming to be in the same Hands, that they made Statutes to preserve the Freedom of Elections, and it was one of their Articles against *Richard* the II. which he himself confess'd, "That tho' "by the Statutes and Customs of the Realm, the People "ought to be free to chuse and depute Knights for the "Counties, to be present in Parliament, to lay open "their Grievances, and to prosecute for Remedies there-"upon, as they think fit. Notwithstanding the said "King, that in his Parliaments he might obtain his "Will, which was rash, often directed his Mandates to "his Sheriffs, that they should return certain Persons "nominated by himself, which Knights he could oblige "to vote as he thought fit, as he very often did, some-"times by Threats and Terror, and sometimes by Gifts, "to consent to those Things, which were prejudicial to "the Realm.

*Country-m.* By this, Master, I perceive our Ancestors had a very clear Notion of their Birth-rights; and that they were not to have Courtiers, or such as the King could influence, impos'd upon them, as their Representatives in Parliament.


## Advertisements.

This Day is publish'd,

¶ The seditious Insects; or, The Levellers assembl'd in Convocation, a Poem. Price 1 s. Sold by R. Bragge in Pater-Noster-Row. N. B. That on Tuesday next will be publish'd, The Landlords Tale, a Poem. From the 28th Book of Orlando Furioso, in two Canto's. Price 1 s. to be had at the said Ware-house.



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